


At the Fall 2014 Annual Meeting of the Smithville Historical Society, a program on the history of Hansmann Mills and the Hansmann and Auwarter families was presented.

The program was presented as a Powerpoint presentation, but has been converted to a .pdf file for use on the website. Certain animation and other features may not function in the pdf, but it is hoped that the main points and the photos will be clear.

A video recording was also prepared by Timothy Hale and is available on youtube.com at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USY2IFg4EJc> (click link left to go to youtube)

The video includes valuable comments and descriptions from John Auwarter, Brian Auwarter, and Christine Buck that are not evident in this pdf file, but the photos are clearer in the pdf.



A Trip Back in Time to Hansmann's Mills

By: John Auwarter and Brian Auwarter

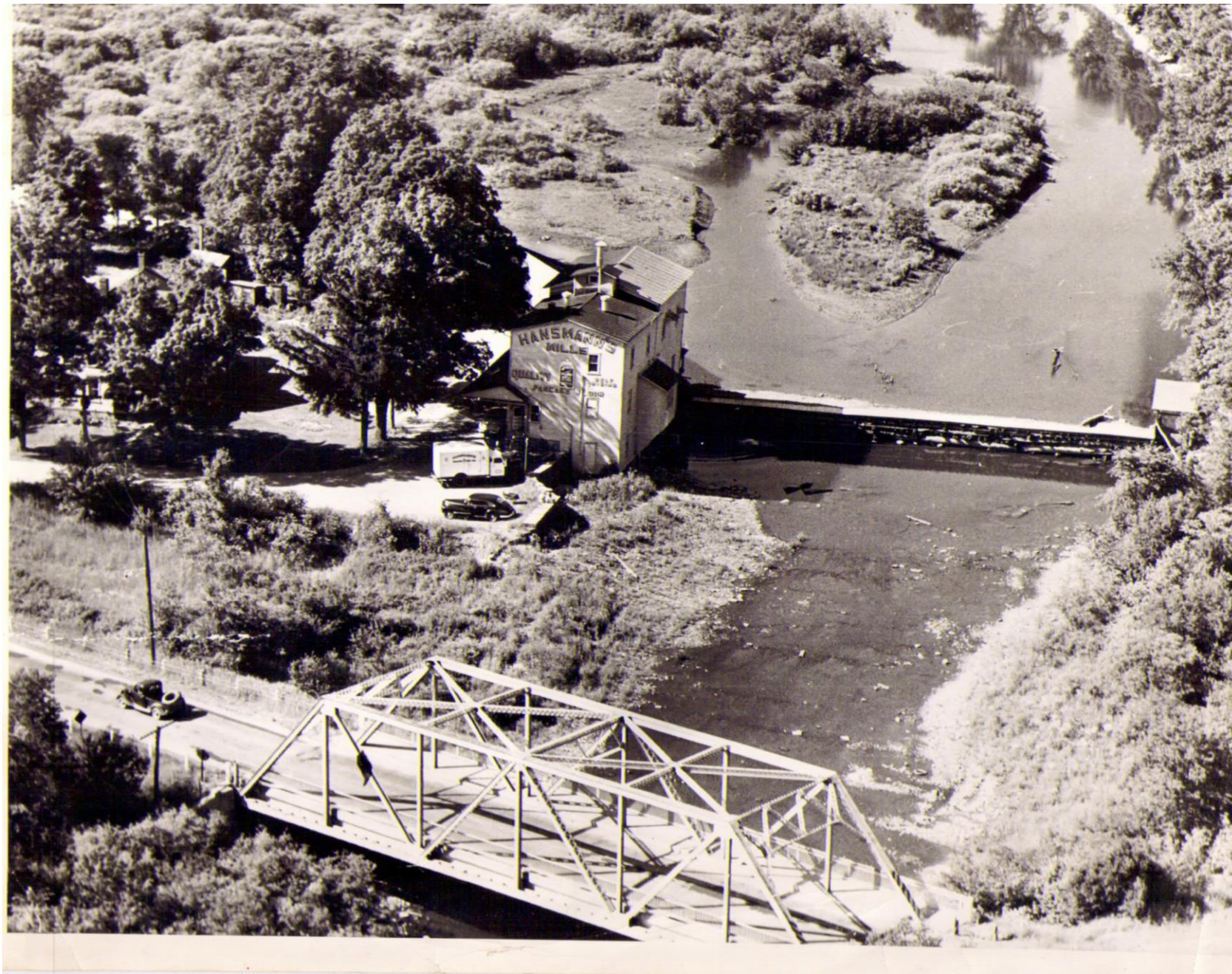
Project Coordination: Sharon Davis

Introduction: Christine Buck



Hansmann's Mills As Many Remember It

Circa 1950s




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The Hansmann's Mill location is Historic

The mill shown on next slide (west side of creek) was lost in the 1890 flood, but was the site of Powell's Mill (1809) and Tanner's Mill for many years. The West bank mills were generally grist and flouring mills.

The East bank also had many mills including Calendars' Mill, Bunnell's Mills, and Rorapaugh's Mills. These were primarily sawing, planing, and carding mills.





Frederick H. Hansmann Arrived in New York City from Germany in 1887 at Age 14

He worked for a grocer, saved his money, and brought a brother over. The two brothers then brought a third brother to the United States.





Frederick H. Hansmann (and dogs) at the Grammercy Hotel in New York

Fred married Meta Rohrsen in 1897 and they bought a
small hotel in New York City.







Hansmann Comes to Smithville

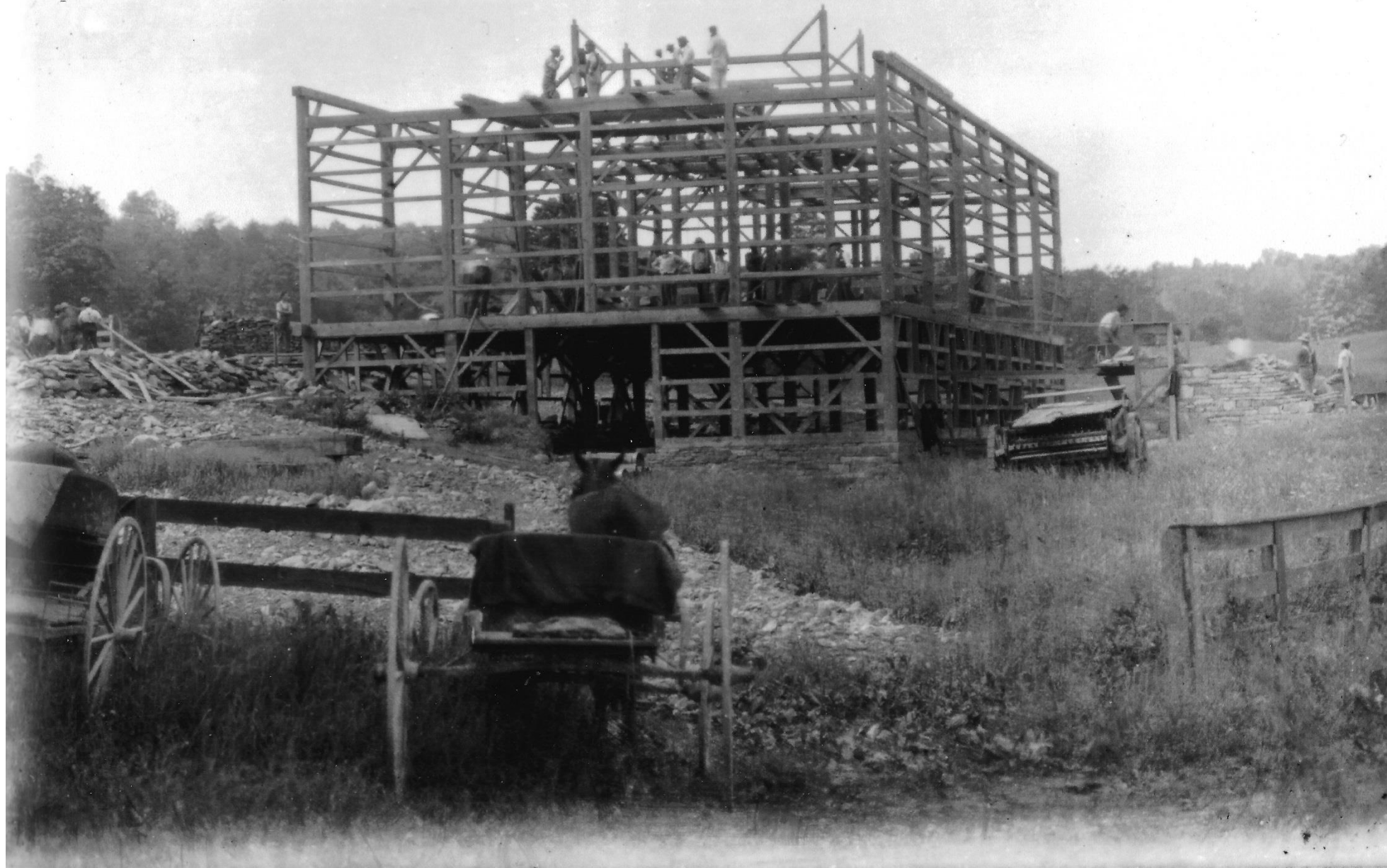
Fred came to the area by train with friends to go grouse hunting. He liked the area and bought the brick house farm on Route 220. The family, including daughter Meta, moved to Smithville between 1900 and 1905.





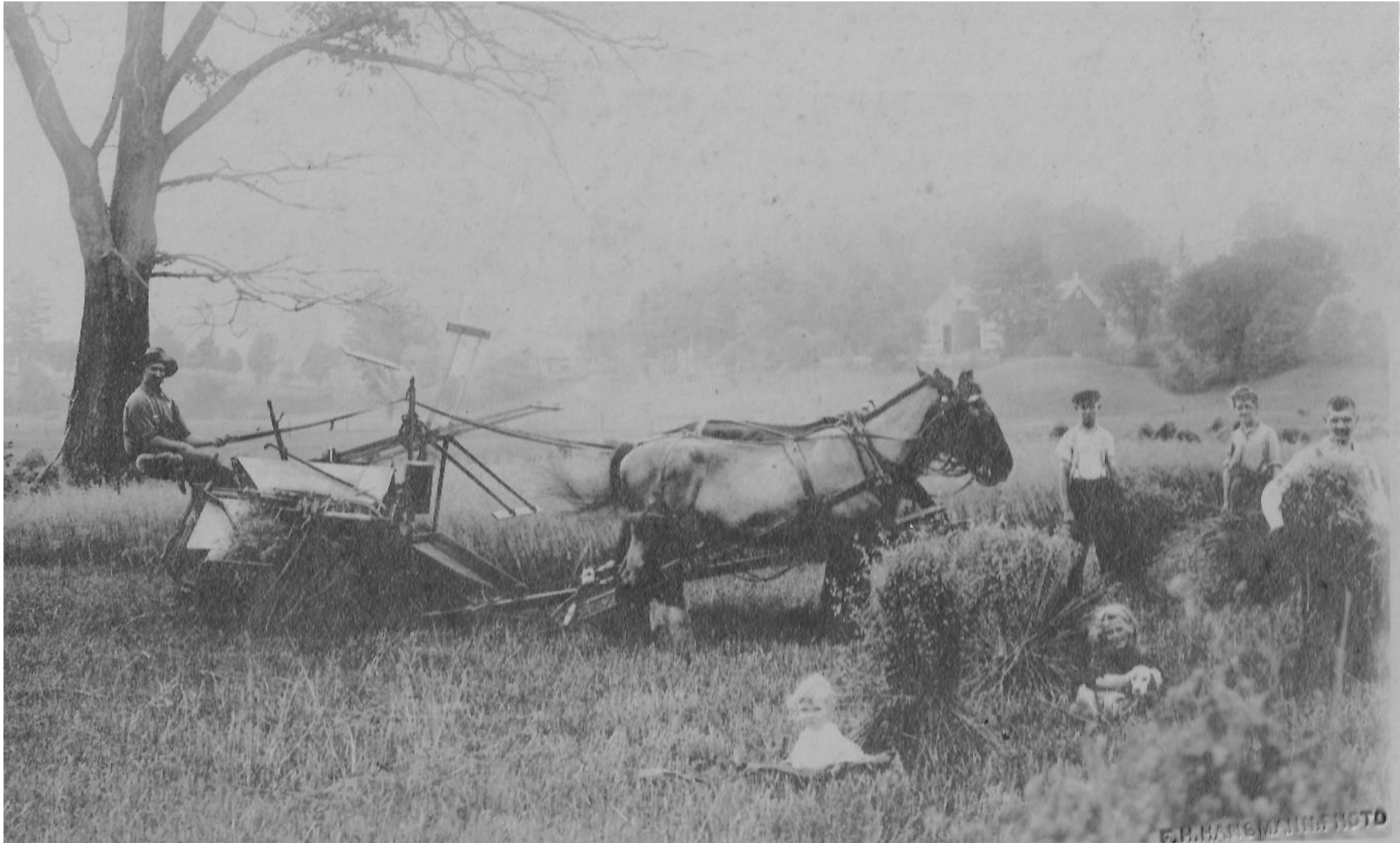
Hansmann Had Not Been a Farmer

Hansmann knew nothing about farming, but taught himself by reading agricultural books and journals. He pursued his new vocation with enthusiasm.





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Frederick, Meta, and daughter Meta (John Auwarter's mother) in early 1900s.





Meta Hansmann (John Auwarter's
mother), attended Smithville Union
School



1st Row - 1908-1909

Gage Flanagan
 John Henry Caldwell
 Elvira Rbrapayh
 Dorothy Adams
 Reta Dickson
 Howard Bailey
 Gerald Mitchell
 Carlell Flanagan

Teachers -
 Maggie Root
 Georgia Weaver

2nd Row -

Lester Davis
 Howard Rhodes
 Nora Shufelt
 Meta ~~Andrews~~ Hansman
 Maymie Barnett
 Elizabeth Royce

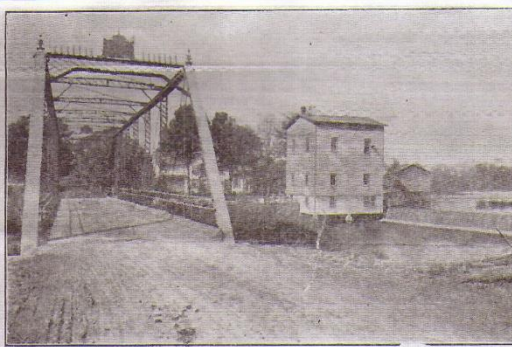


Hansmann Left Farming

Due to heart problems, Hansmann sold the farm and moved to Greene briefly.

In about 1911 the Hansmanns bought the mills and a house in Smithville.

The following real estate advertisement describes the combined mills at the time of the Hansmann purchase.



The FEED MILL was built and equipped in 1893, from plans furnished by Nordyke & Marmon Co. of Indianapolis, Indiana. Size 28x32feet. Three floors as follows;

Basement 7 feet, first story 13 feet, second story 15 feet, Texas floor above second floor, 14x32 feet.

Stone foundation, metal roof, extra heavy construction throughout.

Equipped with buckwheat outfit, consisting of a Cranston Scourer, two double stands of Nordyke & Marmon 6x12 inch rolls, two hexagon scalpers, one round flour dresser, all in excellent condition.

Feed outfit of one old stock, French buhr, 54 inch stone, one corn meal bolt, one corn cracker, one corn sheller. Capacity, one ton of corn meal per hour, through No. 16 wire cloth.

Seven stands of elevators from basement to roof, and complete spouting system. Hopper bottom bins for corn and oats, and large bin for bulk feeds, all filled by elevators. Modern and complete arrangement for handling by one man, with greatest economy.

Water power, with 7 feet head. A 20 horse-power turbine wheel. Dam and flume in good condition. Considered one of the best water powers in the county.

Mill shed for customer's teams. A five ton Osgood wagon scales, installed about 1902.

Store house at railroad connection at Greene, N. Y., on switch of D. L. & W. railroad, one story 24x40 feet on stone foundation. Capacity 100 tons, nearly all which can be run into wagon.

Macadamized State road (5 miles) between Greene and Smithville.

This mill is near the milk station of the Empire State Dairy Company, having about 75 patrons, furnishing as high as 22000 lbs. of milk per day, and there are several creameries within a short radius. No other mill or feed business within five miles of Smithville, in any direction.

The trade is well established, about \$25,000 per year, with a good amount of custom work.

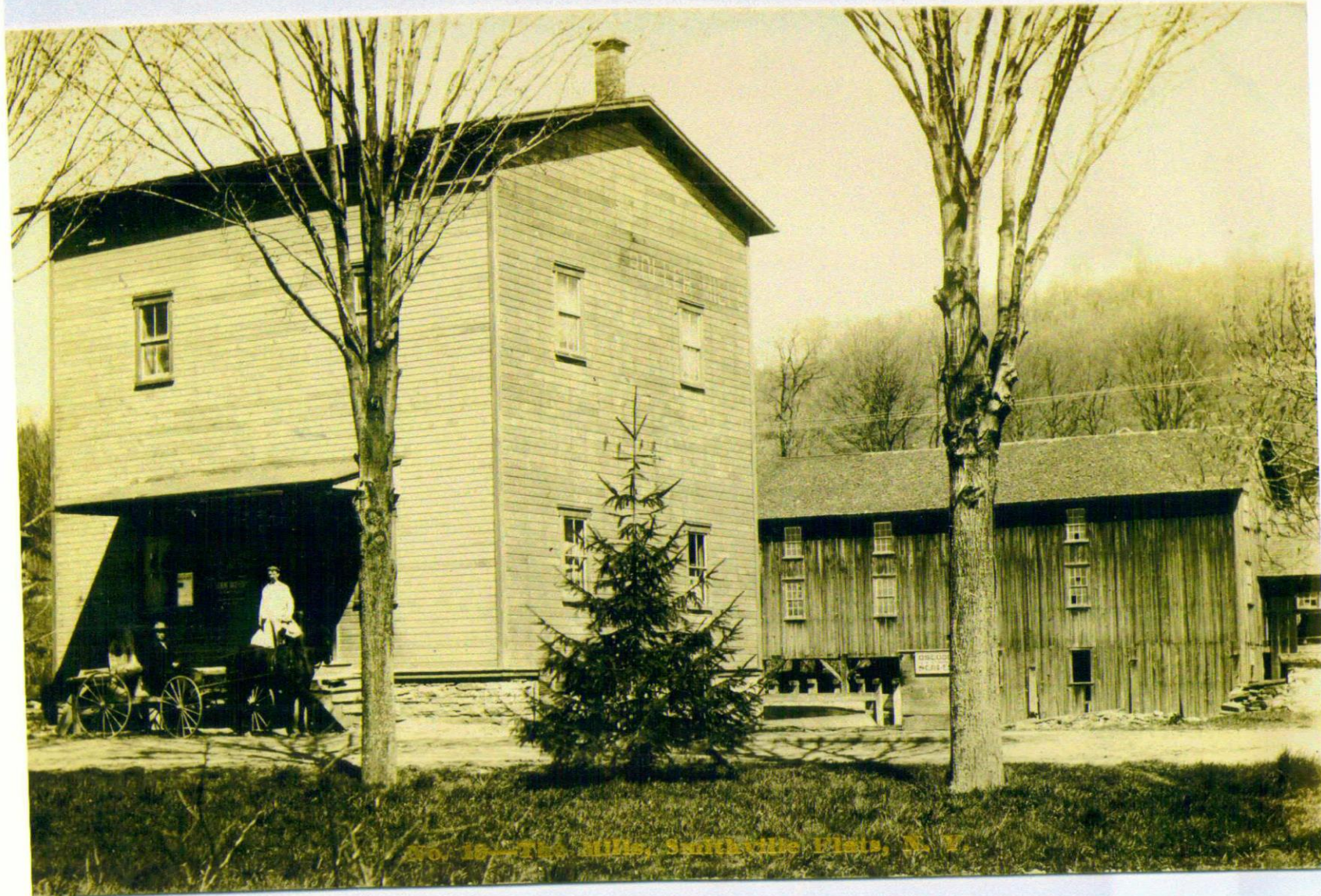
It is the practice at present to let the patrons do the hauling from Greene, as wanted, at 5 cents per hundred, thus avoiding the necessity of keeping a team, and allowing the entire business to be handled by one energetic and hustling man. Good opportunity for increasing trade, and a line of farmers' supplies, fertilizers, lime, seeds, etc. can be added with profit.

SAW AND PLANING MILL. Size 24x108 feet, two floors and basement. Water wheel of 30 horse-power. One J. A. Fay large planer and matcher. Rip and re-sawing saws, carriage and lath mill, all in good working order, and now doing business. Capacity of saw, 1000 feet per hour.

With this mill is about two acres of land. The feed and saw mills are on opposite sides of the dam, with bridge connection, and both should be owned by one party, to hold full control of water rights, which are absolute. The cross mark at right of picture shows location of saw mill.

The saw mill trade for the few years past has not been extensive, but more than meets expenses, and the plant has considerable value. At the same time it is placed at a very low price, for sale with the feed mill, the latter being a well established and very desirable business, giving an exceptional opportunity for an investment, as can be readily determined by investigation. Any interested party can stay at the feed mill and watch the trade as long as he may choose, before buying.

The present owner, because of advanced age wishes to avoid the responsibility of further attention to the business, and will sell the entire property, as above described, at \$5250, to a quick buyer.



10-16-11 The Mills, Smithville Plains, N.Y.

Typical Milling Equipment



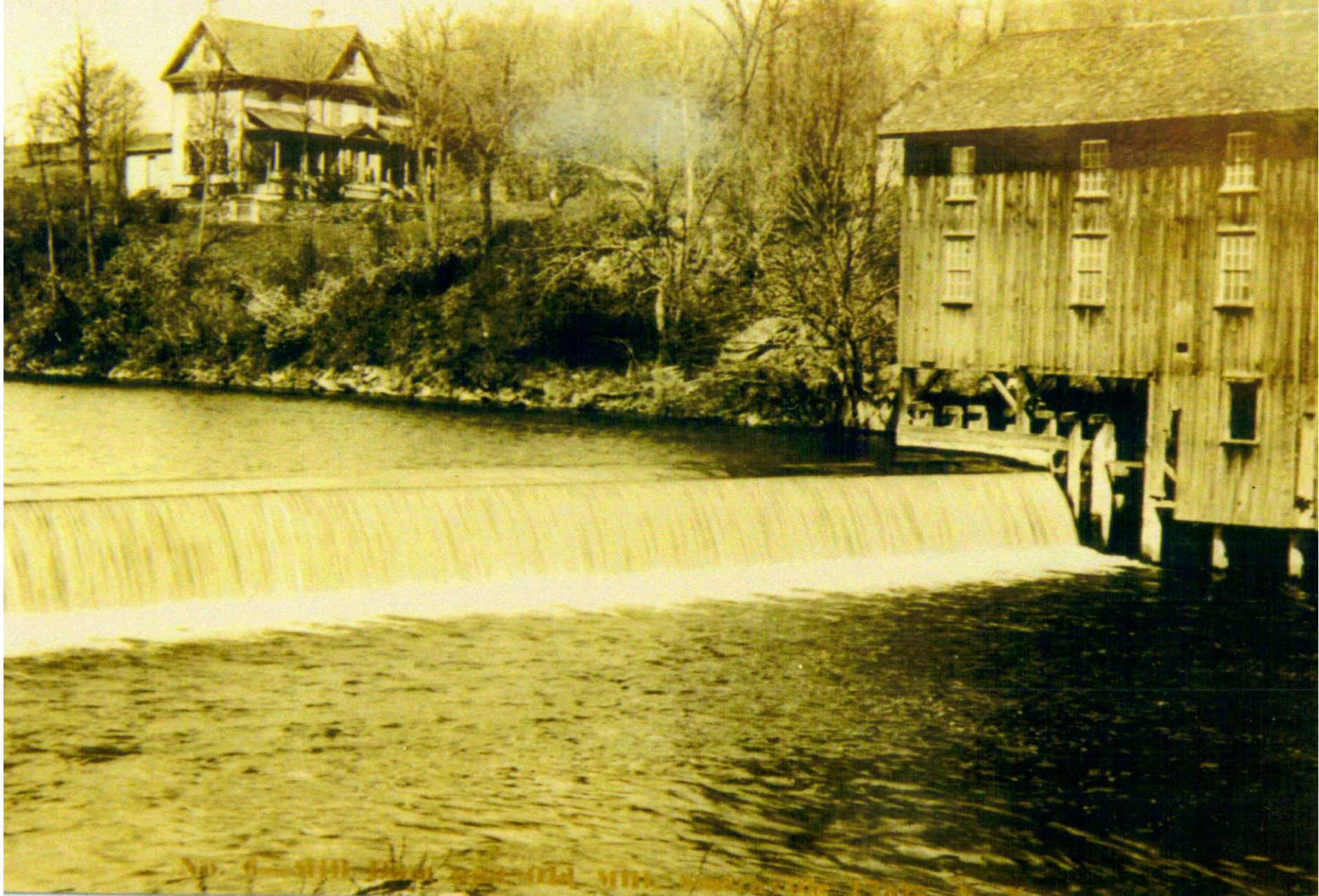
Roller mill



Dresser/
Bolter



Bucket elevators





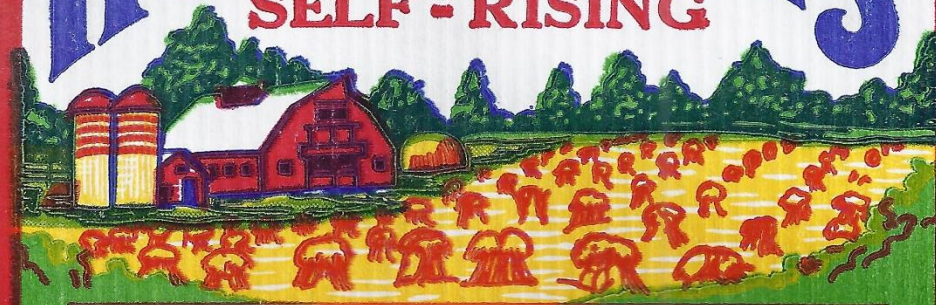
The Hansmann home at 5219 Rt. 41 (Tim Hanna's house today)



Self Rising Pancake Flour Developed

In about 1920 the Hansmanns worked on a self-rising pancake mix in their kitchen. They eventually found the ideal proportions and patented the mix.

Hansmann's
SELF - RISING



PANCAKE
MIX

MANUFACTURED BY
HANSMANN'S MILLS
SMITHVILLE FLATS, N.Y.



John Auwarter, Sr. and daughter Meta in late 1920s after John had joined his father-in-law in the milling business





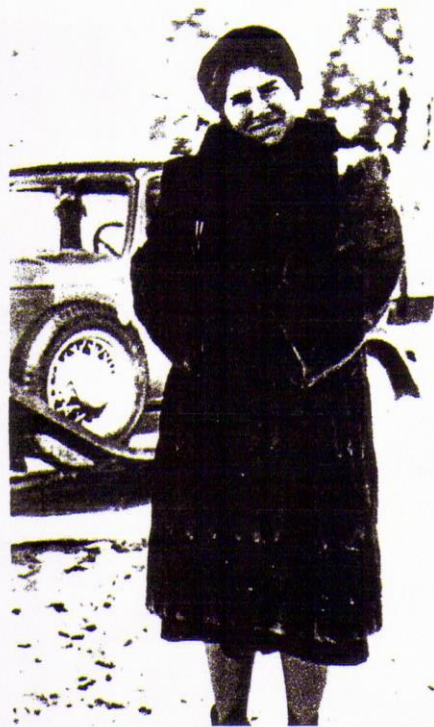
Brothers Fred and
Emil Hansmann in
the mill office.



Genegantslet Mills in the 1935 Flood.



Meta Hansmann, Meta Auwarter and the 1939 Cadillac LaSalle (as viewed from the Hansmann front porch looking north).



*Mete Robinson Hansmann's daughter
Mete Hansmann Amundson*

1940



*Mete Robinson and his
husband Fred Hansmann*

8

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The HANSMANN'S
Buckwheat and Wheat Self-Rising
Pancake Flour
Has been donated to this organization
ASK YOUR GROCER FOR IT





John Auwarter and the 1939/40 Class at Smithville

LEFT TO RIGHT

1939 OR 1940

1ST ROW

John AUWARTER, David Sherwood, BLANK, BLANK, MANLEY SMITH
Ruth BURNS, ED BURNS

2nd Row

Lovie HOFFMANN,

Lou MAY SHARLEY, Birdella SHIPMAN

3rd Row

ED Lewis, BLANK, Merle ROTHERFORTH, CATHERINE ELLIS

Dave Mc DONALD, George HOFFMAN, Clifford LAKE, Dick DENNY

Lillian HARDING, Dick HUTLESTON, SALLY BATES, DON Sherwood

ED O'Neil, Doris Ford, Dorothy Adams TEACHER

SMITHVILLE UNION SCHOOL FRONT STEPS



Three Generations at the Mills

Fred Auwarter, John Auwarter, and Fred Hansmann in the 1930s.



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Ralph Livermore at
Hansmann's Mills.



John Auwarter circa 1950



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The Mills are Sold

In 1970 the business was sold to Albert DeClue who moved it to Bainbridge.

In 1975 DeClue sold the business to Burr Craft who later sold to Slilaty.

In Grain Goodness
FROM

HANSMANN'S®



MAIL ORDER
CATALOG

1-800-348-6676

Dear Friends,

Hello again from all of us at Hansmann's Mills! We hope that you and your family have had a healthy and safe year.

Here at Hansmann's, we have had a very busy and prosperous year, thanks to all of you.

Our 1995-1996 catalog has many new and wonderful gift packages and ideas for the holiday season.

Our Country Store located at 63 North Main Street, Bainbridge, New York, is open Monday through Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST, for your convenience.

Our staff is more than happy to help answer questions about gift ideas for all occasions. Our phone number is 1-800-348-6676 Monday through Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST.

Once again, thank you for your continued support. We wish you and yours a happy and safe holiday season!

Sincerely,
The Staff and Management
of Hansmann's Mills



Unique Gift Items



Need a special gift for the Holidays? Or maybe a Birthday or Anniversary. We have the selections for you! CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-348-6676 Monday-Saturday 8:00-5:00 EST to place your order!



Our popular **HEARTY FAMILY ASSORTMENT BASKET** combines (4) 1 lb. bags of pancake mix. (Old Fashioned, Buttermilk, Buckwheat, Wholewheat) with (2) Gourmet Teas and (2) Gourmet Coffees along with 1 Quart of Pure Maple Syrup. Just right for those who want more variety!

Gift Basket A \$29.95



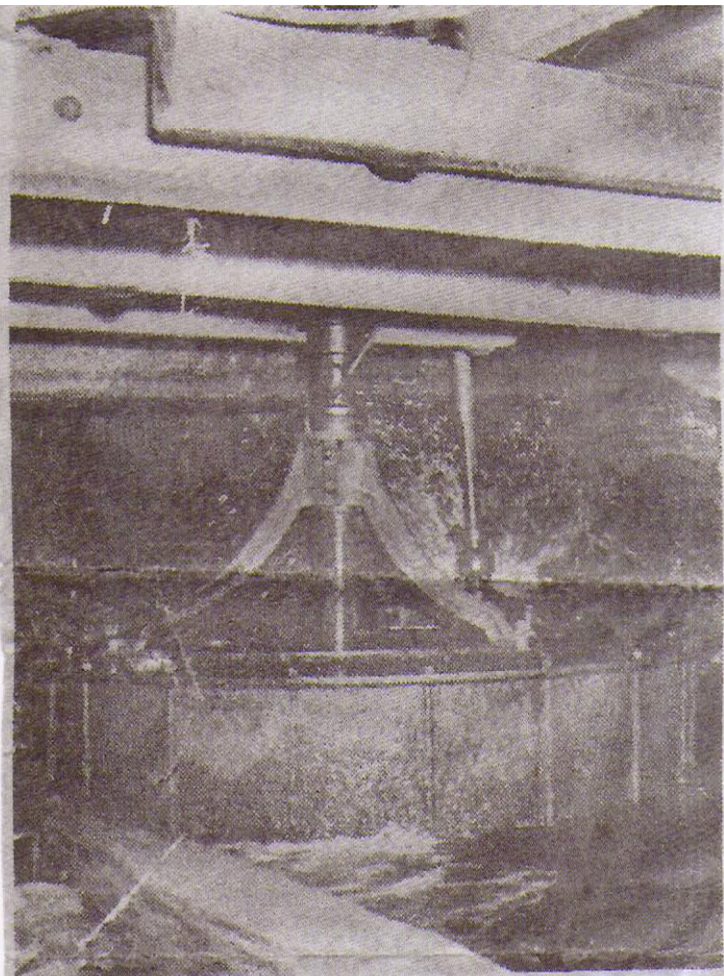
Our **HEARTY FAMILY GIFT BASKET**. This well-appreciated gift consists of (1) 2 lb. bag of Buttermilk Pancake Mix, (1) 2 lb. bag of Old Fashioned Pancake Mix, (2) Gourmet Coffees, (2) Gourmet Teas and (1) Quart of Pure Maple Syrup.



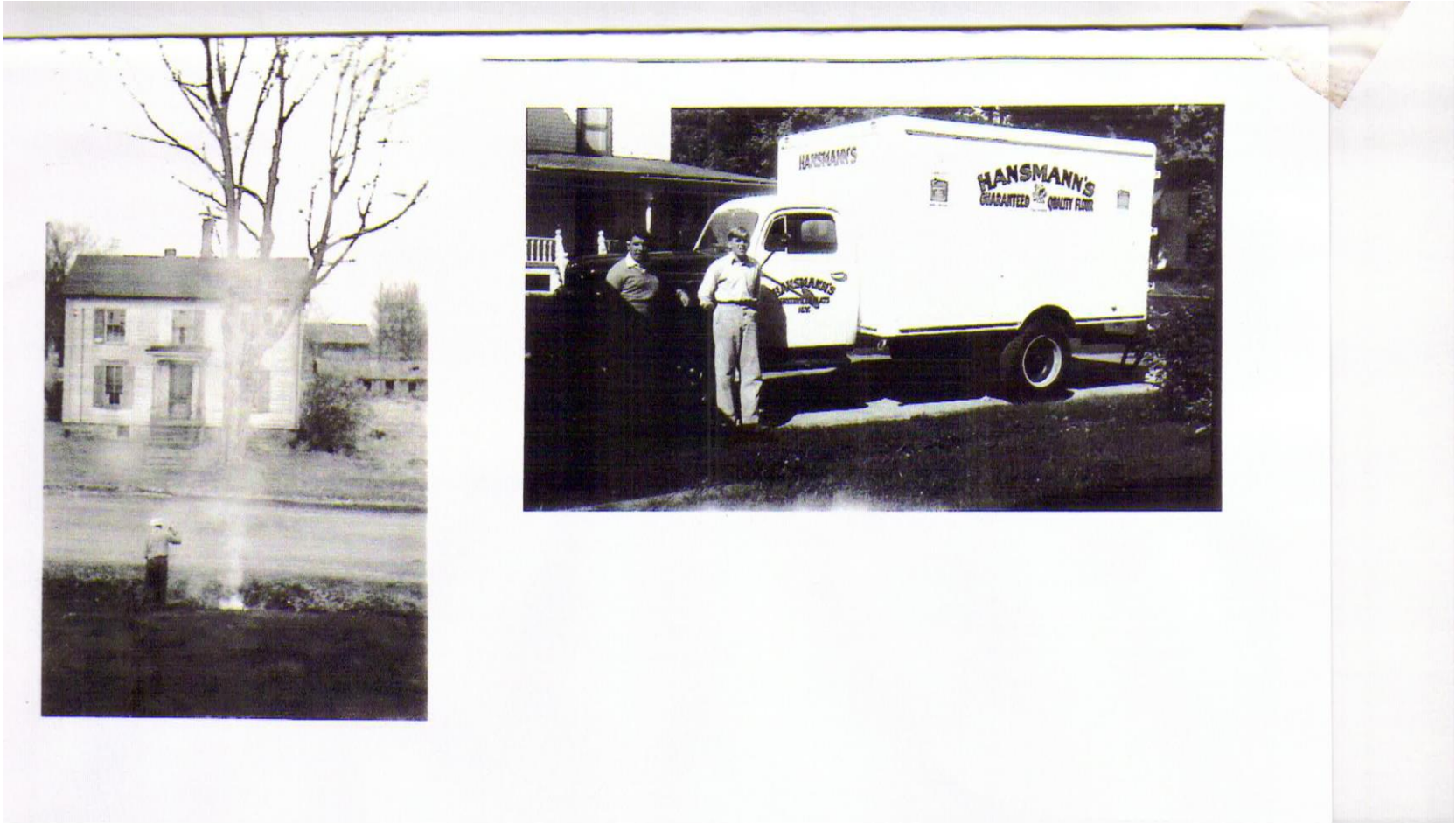
Brian Auwarter at New Hope Mills in Auburn, NY with the Hansmann's Mills safe.

- End of Slides -
Questions?

Thanks to the Auwarter Family!



IN THE BEGINNING—This water turbine under the flour mill at Smithville Flats in Chenango County is almost 100 years old, and is a model of the forerunner of the present electric turbine which gives us our electric age. Making a seven-foot drop through the flume, water from Genegantslet Creek spins this turbine, geared to a century-old bullwheel that runs a score of wheels and rollers in the mill.





Hansmann's ships gift boxes all over the world.

Something to Flip Over

Story and photos by Diane Gallo

When it comes to pancakes, Hansmann's doesn't waffle.

The pancake. America was founded, flourished and flowed west on the fair flat cake. Worthy, but without pretensions, pancakes are as American as the Moms and Dads who flip them from the griddle on Sunday mornings.

Picture it. Four perfectly browned and steaming hotcakes. Globes of butter melting and dripping in a riot of golden abandon. Maple syrup hits the butter. Streams and rivulets of rich amber swirl and dally in the bottom of the plate.

If you ate pancakes today, there's a good chance the mix came from Hansmann's Mills in Bainbridge, a small community located about half way between Oneonta and Binghamton.

With each bag of pancake mix that travels down the packing line, a bit of history goes with it. The label shows the original Hansmann's mill, which was built in Smithville Flats more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

First known as Tanner's Mill, the business began in 1832. In 1865, it came under the ownership of Captain Uri Rorapough, a Civil War veteran. In 1911, it was taken over by a German immigrant named Frederick Hansmann.

In 1920, Hansmann began experimenting with a self-rising pancake flour. After many trials, a fluffy pancake mix was eventually produced. Only one ingredient was needed to make it complete. With the addition of water, convenience food was born. Word spread and soon the demand for the miraculous instant pancake mix established Hansmann's reputation.

Although Hansmann's has moved to

never lived to see the present mill. According to the records, this mill was built by one Monroe Kinsman, for Greene, for a Capt. Uri Rorapough, which is as good a name for a mill-owner as any. Captain Rorapough had served through the Civil War and returned to Smithville Flats to make his fortune in the mill. The mill dam, which holds back the water on which the mill depended for so many years, was also built around this time (although no definite date for the building is given) and this dam is itself a work of art.

It is called a log spar dam, and in a way is taken from the ways of the wild beaver. Giant logs are crossed in alternate layers, one parallel with the stream, and the other crossways. The logs parallel with the stream extend down and back 40 feet into the bed of the stream. The dam is topped with an apron of planks slanted up to carry the water smoothly over the dam. Portions of this dam have withstood at least two major floods. About half of it was washed out in 1890, at which time, it is said, the water washed up to the middle of the second story windows on the mill.

The mill standing now still retains all its huge, hand-hewn beams, and from a tiny office in the front of it, cluttered with papers and almost

dwarfed by a huge old-fashioned safe, Mrs. Frieda Cossitt, daughter to the Hansmann that the product is named after, conducts the business of the company. Mrs. Cossitt is a tall, long-faced woman with very fine, grey hair tied loosely in a bun behind her head and large, horn-rimmed glasses that she takes off and replaces frequently when she talks.

Frieda said that her father, Frederick Hansmann, came to this country at the age of 14 from Germany. When he arrived in the United States he had exactly 75¢ in his pocket and weighed only 65 pounds. He worked here and there, and by the time he had married and had a family, he was the owner of a small hotel and restaurant on the lower East Side of New York City, a district where, at that time, there was a heavy concentration of Germans. Eventually, feeling the call of the wild, he moved his family to Greene, N. Y., where he bought a farm, and several years later, in 1910, he bought the Smithville Flats mill from Captain Rorapough. The mill was then a feed mill and Frederick Hansmann continued to run it as such, grinding meal and buckwheat flour on the side with the mill's water-powered rollers.

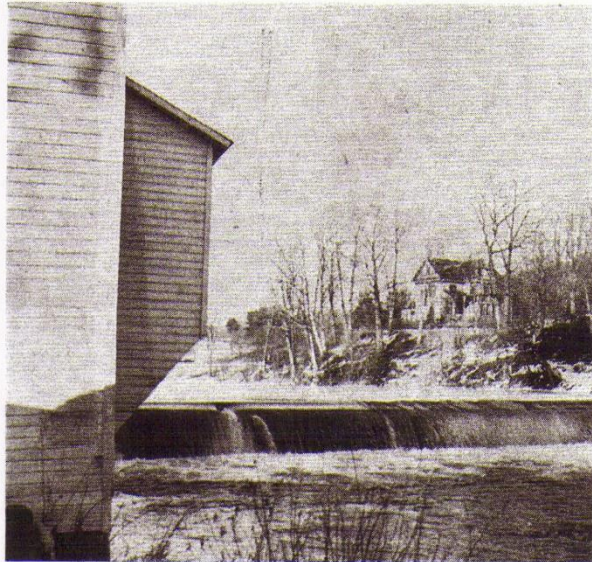
Around 1920 he began experiment-

ing with a self-rising pancake flour (in those days, in order to make a pancake, you had to mix everything yourself) and after experimenting with a wide variety of mixes—Frieda still remembers that the family was the guinea pig in this deal, consuming batches of soggy pancakes until a fluffy one was finally found—he came up with one that he began to market to various people who traded directly with the mill. As word of the mix got around, more and more people began to demand the product, and finally Hansmann, a cautious merchant if ever there was one, began to put it into bags and wholesale it to the local general store.

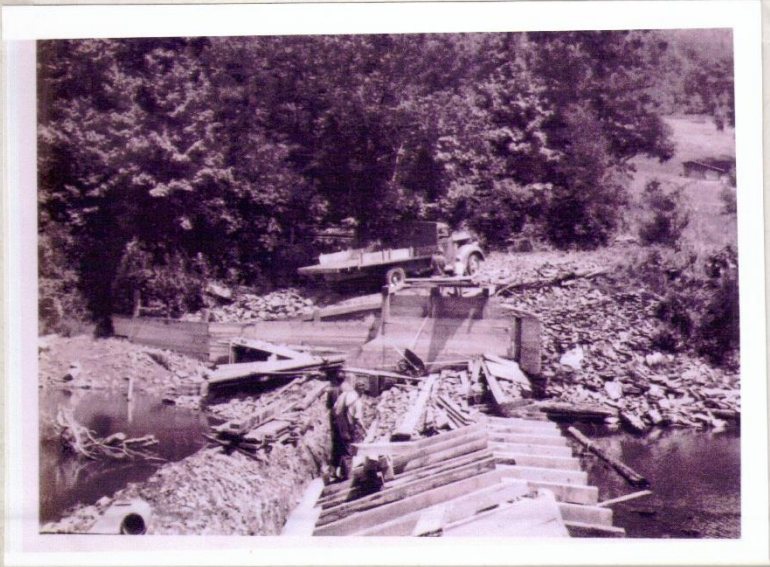
Another daughter of Hansmann, Meta, had married John Auwarter in 1923 and in that year John came in to handle the promotion of the mill's products. At this time the flour product was going under the rather awkward name of Genegantslet Valley Mills Self-Rising Pancake Mix, which was a hefty mouthful for a housewife in a hurry to throw at her grocer. After the death of Frederick Hansmann, in 1940, John Auwarter, who took over as general manager, renamed the product Hansmann's etc., etc. Mr. Auwarter spent a good deal of his time out on the road, and Frieda stayed by the mill to handle production. The former's sons, Frederick, Roderick and John, Jr., have stepped into their father's shoes after the latter's sudden death this past summer.

The mill today is simply operated, despite modern machinery. In the formulating room great sacks of powdered milk, sugar, and buckwheat, wheat, rice and corn flour stand awaiting the master hand to mix them together in the proper (and highly guarded) formula to produce the Hansmann product. These are mixed to the right consistency in large tumblers and then packaged. In a room behind the formulating room are the all-important roller grinders, a series of upright machines that have banks of rollers through which the raw grain is passed and passed again, carried up to the loft and sifted through silk screens, and then brought down and reground. When Mr. Hansmann first took over the plant, these rollers were run entirely by water power. However during the summer, the water level often dropped and the production of the mill dropped proportionately. Around 1925 electricity was run into the mill and the rollers have since depended for the most part on that to turn.

Unique at the mill is the famous



The clean, colonial lines of the old mill in Smithville Flats outline Genegantslet Creek during the spring freshet, as it pours over the mill dam.



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Flapjack King A. Burr Craft put his nose to the grindstone and expanded Hansmann's "just add water" line.

a new site and has a new owner, the "just add water" tradition goes on.

A. Burr Craft, Hansmann's proprietor, says, "We have the ability to make up any kind of formula. I was going to say recipe, but recipe sounds like . . ." He searches for a word.

Like somebody's grandmother is making it?

"Yes," he agrees, "only I'm the grandmother. I make up the formulas at home in my research facility." He means kitchen.

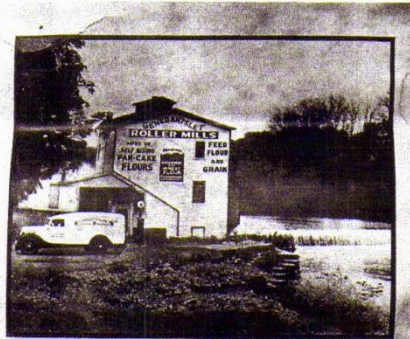
Echoing the early Hansmann family experience, he says, "My daughter really got sick and tired of eating corn muffins when I was in the research and development stage."

There's a girl with true grit. "Our biggest selling items," says Craft, "are the two original pancake recipes that came from Hansmann. That's the regular and the buckwheat mixes."

Not content to rest on past achievements, Craft put his nose to the grindstone and came up with three different pancake mixes: buttermilk, corn and whole wheat. He also developed a doughnut mix, biscuit mix and a Boston brown bread mix. All of which just need water. The mixes are the company's mainstays. But Hansmann's also packages a wide variety of flours and yellow corn meal.

Craft, who's been in the hotcake game since 1975, says, "Pancakes are a seasonal product. The heavy season

Diane Gallo writes frequently about travel, food, and rural people and things for New York Alive. Her reminiscence of growing up in New York City appeared in January/February.



FREDERICK H. HANSMANN
Quality Pure Buckwheat Flour

Hansmann's Soft-Rising Pancake, Buckwheat and Wheat Biscuit and Cake Flours

Telephone 21-F-13 SMITHVILLE FLATS, N. Y.

The Quality of Hansmann's Products Has Long Been Recognized in the Field of Flour.



1939 calendar shows original Hansmann's grist mill on Geneganslet Creek in Smithville Flats.

starts in September and goes through April. In the summer, it tapers off a bit."

An average of five thousand-six hundred and twenty-five pounds of pancake mix is packaged each day to keep Central New York and Northern Pennsylvania happily fed up.

At five working days a week, that's more than twenty-eight thousand pounds a week. In a fifty-week year, that adds up to more than one million pounds.

In each pound of mix, there are five servings. There are four five-inch diameter flatcakes in each serving— which comes to more than twenty-three million pancakes a year.

It stacks up. Since Craft's takeover, a lot of pancakes have gone over the griddle. He has a flip file of letters from happy customers who were the catalyst for Hansmann's growing mail-order business.

"People come into the area to camp out or on picnics," Craft says, "and they try one of our pancake mixes they find in the supermarket. When they get home, they write and ask if they can order it from us directly. We ship all over. Two years in a row, I sent pancake mix to

a customer in Singapore. The postage was dreadful."

As a result of the mail-order business, Craft developed half a dozen gift box combinations. Along with a variety of pancake mixes, some of the boxes contain locally produced maple syrup and wildflower honey. The sideline has a respectable turnover and the gift boxes are selling like . . . well, hotcakes.

In addition to the gift boxes, Hansmann's has spread out into label packaging of special blends for companies like Pepperidge Farm and Neiman-Marcus. Although Hansmann's has a large output, it remains an old-fashioned operation. "It's like the old days with the horse and buggy," Craft says. "In the course of a day, our truck will make twenty-five stops on the local routes."

And as in the old days, Craft and his five employees are flapjacks of all trades. They all do a little bit of everything. During a typical day, they'll load and unload trucks, sift flour, mix batches, blend them and run the packaging line. Cleaning is constant. Where a light dusting of flour covers everything, white is the color to wear.

It's a dusty business with a high turnover, but somebody's got to do it. ■

Mills shares news

It was new and it was novel, and also very good — good as in appetizing.

I'm not sure who came up with the promotional gimmick — Hansmann's Mills owners Robin and George Slilaty, Economic Development Agency head Robert Hammons or those smart-thinking promoters with the Chenango County Chamber of Commerce.

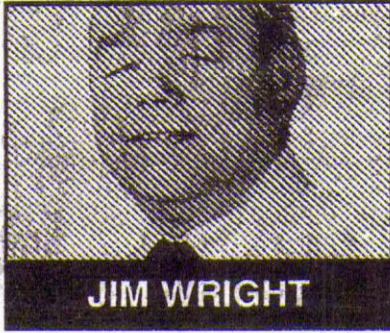
Regardless, it was smart thinking to determine buttermilk biscuits, doughnuts, Boston brown bread and bread laced with chocolate chips were the true way to a reporter's notebook or a broadcaster's microphone.

And if all that wasn't enough to entice a working person to attend a 9 a.m. news conference, then toss in Hansmann's Mills' new apple pancakes and some maple syrup.

And Burr Craft himself, the former owner of Hansmann's Mills, prepared our delicious "silver dollar"-size breakfast.

"What we are eating is creating jobs," Hammons said while relaying the good news that Hansmann's Mills is not only staying in Bainbridge, but expanding and planning to hire more people.

The \$2 million complex will be built on five acres of land, almost a mile from the downtown four corners and on the east side of Route 7.



JIM WRIGHT

The new apple pancakes are "a hell of a great product," said George Slilaty, who bought the business only 2½ years ago and has tripled its sales output in that time.

The company made 60 trial batches before finding the taste the owners wanted, Robin Slilaty said.

Hammons said Hansmann's Mills is one of the oldest companies in Chenango County. Its origins reach back to the early years of the past century — 1832, to be precise — when it was known as Tanner Mills and later Rorapough Mills after a Civil War hero, Capt. Uriah Rorapough.

Fredrick H. Hansmann became the sole proprietor in 1911 and changed the place's name to Geneganslet Mills. Later, it was named after him. Some of us still remember the mill beside the dam on Geneganslet Creek in Smithville Flats, before the business was moved to Bainbridge.



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SOCIAL SECURITY PAYROLL RECORD

Name John S. [unclear] Acct. No. 111
 Address [unclear] Occupation [unclear]

Pay Period: From		To			DATE PAID
DATE	DAY	TAXABLE	EXEMPT	TOTAL	
	SUN				
	MON				
	TUES				
	WED				
	THUR				
	FRI				
	SAT				
TOTAL		30	2,720.30	3000	1

Other Earnings				
Total Taxable Earnings				
Deduct Federal O. A. B. Tax				
Total				3000
Other Deductions				
NET PAID				2720

[Signature]
SIGNATURE

FREDERICK H. HANSMANN
 MANUFACTURER AND DEALER IN
FLOUR, GRAIN AND FEED
 Hansmann's Self Rising Buckwheat and Wheat,
 Pancake and Clear Buckwheat Flour a Specialty.
 Smithville Flats, N. Y. 193

M
 MC CASKEY ALLIANCE O.
 Reg. No. _____ Clerk _____ Account Forwarded _____

1	Corn		
2	1-BW	27	
3	Meal	17	
4	Cracked Corn	130	
6	Midds		
7	Mixed Feed		
8	Gluten	4,13	
9	Mash	12	
10	Dairy Ration		
11			
12	47	9,03	
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

YOUR ACCOUNT STATED TO DATE. IF ERROR IS FOUND, RETURN AT ONCE.